



# Fact Sheet:



## Rural Development

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Blueprint for Stronger Service is key to building a modern and efficient service organization that is closely in tune with the long-term vitality of rural America and the success of American agriculture. The plan takes a realistic view of the needs of American agriculture in a challenging budget climate, and lays out USDA's plans to modernize and accelerate service delivery while improving the customer experience through use of innovative technologies and business solutions. Ultimately, these improvements will help producers and businesses continue to drive America's economy and respond to 21st century agricultural challenges.

USDA is proud of our work and partnership with America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities. Today, American agriculture is a bright spot in the nation's economy, with record income and exports. Over three years as USDA has made record investments in rural America, unemployment in rural America has fallen faster than in other parts of the country. During that same time, USDA has also looked closely at the way it does business. A Blueprint for Stronger Service helps to preserve this success and the USDA investments that helped to make them possible in the long term.

Over the past three years, USDA's Rural Development Mission Area (RD) has worked hard to do more with less. To manage current and future budget challenges, and to ensure critical investments in rural America continue, RD took a variety of steps to cut costs and improve services, including:

- Cut travel and conference budgets;
- Since 2002, RD has reduced its staff years by 963;
- Continued implementation of a common application process and uniform documentation requirements, making it easier for customers to apply for multiple programs at once, with the potential to save 140,000 customer hours; and
- RD implemented a revised fee structure in 2011 for single family home loans that allows local lenders to provide greater access to mortgage credit across rural America to creditworthy rural applicants. The guaranteed loan program provided over 130,000 homeownership opportunities to rural residents.

A Blueprint for Stronger Service details a list of recommendations: 133 recommendations affirm processes already in place, 27 serve as initial improvements, and others are aimed at longer-term improvements. The initial improvement recommendations include the following:

- Consolidate more than 700 cell phone plans into about 10;
- Standardize civil rights training and purchases of cyber security products;
- Ensure more efficient and effective service to our employees by moving toward more centralized civil rights, human resource, procurement, and property management functions, creating millions of dollars in efficiencies without sacrificing the quality of our work.

Budget reductions, staff attrition and increased workload also necessitated a review of USDA facilities, offices and lab operations across the country. As part of the Blueprint for Stronger Service, RD plans:

- To close 43 area and sub offices in 17 states. More than 450 RD offices remain throughout the United States. In most cases, offices recommended for closure are either not staffed or staffed with just one or two employees. In other cases, improved technology has reduced the need for these brick and mortar facilities. See table below.

The list below details the states and corresponding counties where RD offices will be closed.

1. Alabama: Houston County
2. Arizona: Mohave County
3. Arkansas: Izard, Faulkner, Hot Spring, White, and Lawrence Counties
4. Delaware: Kent and Sussex Counties
5. Hawaii: 1)(Kosrae, Chuuk, and Yap), and 2) Hawaii County
6. Indiana: Monroe, Tippecanoe, LaPorte, and Marshall Counties
7. Louisiana: Livingston County
8. Maryland: Calvert, Garrett, and Worcester Counties
9. Mississippi: DeSoto County
10. Missouri: Jasper, Jefferson, Cape Girardeau, and Cole Counties
11. North Carolina: Burke, Chowan, and Caswell Counties
12. Oklahoma: Pushmataha and Pittsburg Counties
13. Pennsylvania: Juniata County
14. South Carolina: Richland and Sumter Counties
15. Tennessee: Anderson, Bedford, Bledsoe, Cannon, Carter, Cocke, Humphreys, Sevier, and Trousdale Counties
16. Virginia: Essex County
17. Wyoming: Park County

As we move forward, USDA will continue to find ways to modernize its services, improve the customer experience, and ensure a successful, sustainable future for rural America.